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Recycling in Idaho: Computer Recycling

Disposing of your old PCs, Monitors and Computer Equipment

Did You Know...

- ✓ More than 20 million personal computers become obsolete each year.
- ✓ By 2005, the number is expected to jump to 65 million.
- ✓ Computer components contain lead, mercury, cadmium, chromium and other hazardous materials.
- ✓ The glass screens or cathode ray tubes (CRTs) in monitors can contain as much as 27% lead.
- ✓ Disposing of hazardous waste is subject to state and federal regulations and requirements.

What Should I Do With My Old Computer?

Most computer equipment contains hazardous materials that should not be disposed of in a landfill. Before throwing your old PC away, consider the following options:

Upgrade. In many cases additional memory or a new monitor or part can improve your computer's performance and extend its usefulness.

Donate. Many charities, schools, and other organizations need equipment. A computer that is two years old could be new to a charity. Look in your local phone book for organizations that may accept your donation and always call first to verify their terms and conditions. Many charities find themselves burdened with the cost and disposal of unusable items.

Sell. Are there shops in your town that specialize in computer rebuilds and upgrades? Do they sell used computers? These companies may be interested in purchasing or taking a donated computer that they will rebuild and resell or salvage for parts. Look in your phone book under computers or electronics. These same companies may be able to help you upgrade your existing system.

Recycle. Several national and regional programs recycle used computers and accessories. The metals, plastics and other parts of the system are often valuable and can be salvaged for reuse. Trained professionals can recycle computer components and recover these products.

Most major computer manufacturers and many waste management companies offer some type of computer recycling program, and consumers should determine which program best fits their needs. For a nominal charge, these programs will:

- accept most computer brands
- provide pick-up from home or office
- pay for shipping costs
- donate working components to charity
- recycle unusable parts
- provide a certificate of completion

Dispose. As a last resort, you may be able to dispose of old equipment in local landfills, with permission from the landfill. Many communities have household hazardous waste programs to handle potentially hazardous products separately from normal trash. Contact your waste management company, city or local landfill operator for safe disposal information.

Benefits of Recycling

- ❑ By recycling or safely disposing of your old computer equipment, you benefit the environment and more.
- ❑ Prevent landfill expansion. By diverting bulky computer equipment from the landfill, you conserve landfill space.
- ❑ Protect the water, land and air. Recycling computers keeps metals such as lead, cadmium and mercury out of landfills and protects our water, land, air and communities.
- ❑ Social benefits. Donating your old computer not only helps the environment, but affords individuals and organizations who cannot buy computers new opportunities and resources.
- ❑ Conservation. Reusing the plastics, metals and other parts from old computers conserves natural resources. Products made from recycled materials often use fewer resources and require less energy to produce.

For More Information

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

DEQ provides information on household hazardous waste and pollution prevention and can offer regulatory and technical assistance. Visit our web site at www.deq.state.id.us.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The EPA offers information on household hazardous waste, waste disposal and recycling. For more information about computers and their impact on our landfills, visit the EPA web site at www.epa.gov.

Computer Recycling Programs

Most computer manufacturers provide information about their computer recycling programs on their web sites or you can call their toll-free numbers for more details.

Look in your local phone book for waste management companies in your area. These companies may offer computer recycling.